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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS

7th August, 1946

DEAR MEMBER,

In the space between the last News-Letter and this one the editor has been in Holland on the invitation of Church leaders there. This News-Letter will, therefore, be a summary of a very full week of visits and conversations, any one of which would have yielded enough material for a whole News-Letter.

GENERAL CONDITIONS IN HOLLAND

Before coming to the main topic which is the part played by Christian forces in national life in Holland, it is perhaps necessary to sketch in the physical background. The food situation is improving. There is plenty of bread and the sugar ration is the same as our own. Fruit and vegetables are abundant and expensive. The total fat ration is only half that of this country, and the meat ration about a quarter. It has to be remembered that except in certain agricultural areas people have suffered a long period of severe malnutrition. Rations in Haarlem, for example, in the months preceding the liberation were 400 calories a day.

Communications are improving but are still not easy. Railway rolling stock is being brought back from all over Germany, much of it in poor condition. Only a few centres have motor buses : trams are few and crowded. Everybody is short of clothes. They have coupons, but there are no stocks in the shops. Everywhere there is anxiety about the future of Holland, and the loss of Indonesia. Indonesia made Holland a very rich country. How soon and on what terms trade can be reopened is a matter of great concern to a country which is very far from self-supporting.

I was told many times that there had been a great demoralization of the people. The occupation was above all else a severe moral shock. There were some terrible scenes in some cities when periodic round-ups took place and men were marched away to forced labour. The shock caused some to react in a grim determination to preserve civilized values. Others let themselves go on the tide. There is strong feeling against the Germans. At the Student Christian Movement summer camp, for example, a whole morning was spent discussing the question whether German students should be invited to an international camp in Holland in the autumn. Older students and members of staff, some of whom had been in concentration

camps, felt that young students were far too ready to forget without understanding the content of forgiveness. There are many thousands of collaborators in prison, including women and children—a problem full of most difficult practical and moral issues. We in this country should be deeply thankful that we do not have to face it.

THE NEW LIFE IN THE CHURCH

There has been an outbreak of new life within the Dutch Church, beginning with the resistance and continuing in different forms since the liberation. An account of this new life would deserve a place in the Christian News-Letter as news. But it ought to be more than news. It ought to make us in this country ask whether the war has really changed in any radical sense the life of our Churches and whether we can see, not a crop of experiments, but enduring trends which are the result of a thought-out policy.

What has been happening in the Dutch Reformed Church falls roughly under two heads. First a powerful sense of responsibility both for the life of the nation (i.e. in public affairs) and for evangelism. Secondly, a revival of the spiritual life of the Church in order that it may be fit to meet these responsibilities. The two movements have gone on side by side. The occupation gave the opportunity, and men of vision brought the various movements to birth. The occupation forced certain questions to the fore upon which Christians and Christian congregations had to make decisions which were inescapable. They had to decide whether or not to contribute through the congregations money and food for the support of Jews and resisters. They had to decide whether or not to allow their children to join Nazi youth organizations. These decisions were talked out in the congregations. People crowded the Churches because the pulpit was the only place where even a measure of the truth could be spoken. There were informers within the Church and some who talked unwisely outside the congregations about the decisions taken within them. But the cohesion of the Church was so strong that although leaders were put in prison, the Nazis did not dare to close the Churches.

The short term result of the prominent part played by the Dutch Church in the resistance was that it gained the confidence of the people. The long term result was a deepened sense of responsibility among all the liver elements of the Church for the affairs of the nation. If the Church had a lead to give, the nation was ready to accept it. The period of resistance was in some ways the easiest time for the Church. It had to meet what came to it and was forced into the position of being the mouth-piece of an otherwise gagged and silent nation. But after the war the Church had to *seek* the means to go on expressing its concern for the nation, and it has many instruments for doing so. The new Synod of the Church is a genuine

voice of the Church. When it speaks about national matters, it does so with wisdom and is listened to with respect. There has also been a great outburst of literary and journalistic activity, and the Church has at its disposal a widely read daily paper and a number of weeklies.

Of great importance in the relationship between Church and nation was the Netherlands Peoples Movement which came to birth soon after the occupation. It consisted of the hostages at St. Michielsgestel camp (many of whom were political and religious leaders), and the group around the illegal paper *Je maintiendrai*. Their programme was the spiritual regeneration of the Dutch people and the reorientation of political life. This programme contained a passage on the right influence of the Church in matters of community and State, an important piece of thinking. The old party alignments were giving rise to dangerous antitheses, a line-up which put Roman Catholics and Protestants against each other, and set Christians on one side and non-Church people on the other. This division was maintained not only in political parties—the Roman Catholics, Christian Historicals, etc., but in the Trade Unions where there were separate unions for Catholics, Protestants and neutrals, not to mention a Marxist break-away.

The Netherlands Peoples Movement gave birth to a Labour Party which brought together certain Social Democrats, younger Protestants, younger Catholics, some Liberals and some who had not before been particularly interested in politics. There were high hopes that this party would be the first to break out from direct domination by the Churches and unite Christians of all Churches, but at the elections in May the " break-through," as they came to call it, did not take place. The tocsins were sounded. The Roman Catholics were called to support the Church against Communism ; most of the Protestants rallied to the more conservative Christian Historical Party. The Roman Catholics emerged as the largest single party in Parliament and the Labour Party came second. A recent pronouncement of the Synod has encouraged Church members to join non-Christian Trade Unions. But those who took the lead in this matter of the relation of the Churches to politics and to Trade Unions have been widely misunderstood and strongly criticized within the Church.

EVANGELISM

Second comes the intensified awareness on the part of the Church that it must evangelize or perish. The occupation stripped men and women of the restraining formalities of civilized life. They behaved as the sort of people they really were. Hundreds of people in the Churches had the blinkers taken off their eyes and saw the extent to which society had been secularized and Christian morality

undermined. Yet, a common plight and a common desperate need have removed from the speech of Dutch Churchmen about these matters that unconscious undercurrent of self-righteousness and of blame which creeps into so many Church conversations about evangelism. This re-emphasis on evangelism interpenetrates everything.

During the war there were organized every year what were called " Church Weeks for Everybody," when outsiders were brought in, and the response was very great. Congregations are markedly larger than before the war. They have organized Bible study for outsiders. The Church has special papers directed to their needs. Committees of the Synod have worked to discover what are the influences which keep men in touch with even some vestige of the Christian faith and to make them more effective. Thus, as a small example, they have tackled the question of calendars which hang on the walls of every home. The reorganization of radio is a larger matter in which these committees are exerting an influence. Supporting all this work there is the newly established sociological institute designed to give to all who are engaged in evangelism knowledge of the way in which different groups in society think, the influences which play upon them and dispose them towards or against the Church's message. The Church has a full-time officer who designs and carries through experiments in evangelism for different sections of the community.

THE ROOT OF THE QUESTION

It is clearly seen by leaders in the Dutch Reformed Church that the capacity to carry through this double task of exerting the right influence in public affairs and carrying on vigorous evangelism depends on two things : first, on the quality of the life of individual congregations ; and secondly, on the emergence of a new type of leadership, carefully chosen and skilfully trained.

In 1940 there began a movement which has steadily grown in strength, known as " Congregation Rebuilding." The leader of this movement was Professor Kraemer. The maximum number of any committee permitted by the Germans being twenty, Professor Kraemer invited nineteen men from all parts of the country to become members of the sub-committee of the Synod for this work. The terms in which he invited them were roughly as follows : " In the name of the Synod I invite you to join a committee for the spiritual rebuilding of our congregations. We shall meet fortnightly. The meetings will be long and the amount of work to be done between them will be heavy. If you do not wish to shoulder this burden, I ask you not to accept this invitation." Every person invited accepted. Their discussions revealed that in all parts of the country congregations were lethargic, elders and deacons were unaware of

their responsibilities, and the Church was rent by theological controversy between Orthodox and Liberals which was weakening its hold on the living realities of Christian experience.

Professor Kraemer and his associates travelled thousands of miles under the fearful difficulties of the occupation to meet congregations. "I did one thing in our first meeting," said Dr. Kraemer, "I described to the men and women present the Church as it is. A lot of them resented it, but there were always people who got up and said, 'How did you know what our congregation was like? That is exactly what happens here,' and asked for help in beginning anew." The committee then sent carefully chosen younger ministers by twos to the 1,200 congregations to meet the presbyteries and to ask them three questions: "What is a presbytery? What is an elder? What is a deacon?" The answers they received plunged them into despair. It was clear that with a few exceptions the presbyteries regarded themselves as business committees of earthly institutions, and scarcely a note of spiritual responsibility came into their account of their duties. Then the work began, with all-day meetings of presbyteries from which business was banished and the only topic of discussion was the true task of the lay leaders of the Church. From this came what can only be described as a re-evangelism of the congregations themselves. Gradually the bickerings were transcended as they saw their task in relation to the district round them and the life of their country. The temptations to swing back to the easy-going ways are now strong, but the work of stimulation into which a great many of the clergy have been caught goes on.

"CHURCH AND WORLD"—THE HEART OF THE NEW MOVEMENT

Last comes the question of new leadership, and here is the most exciting part of the story. Towards the end of the war there died in the concentration camp at Buchenwald one of Holland's great men, Dr. Eykman. No man better understood what dechristianization really meant in the life of the nation, or had done more to combat it. At Buchenwald he thought out the plans now embodied in the institute "Church and World". At the end of the war the Church raised enough money to purchase a fine estate, "de Horst" at Driebergen. Semi-permanent buildings, the gifts of Churches in other countries, have been added. This place is the heart and centre of the new movement in the life of the Church. To it are brought groups and conferences of all kinds, related to the work previously described. Members of the staff travel about the country, keeping touch between the work at the centre and that going on in congregations and localities. Of the five directors of "Church and World" at de Horst one is an ordained man and the rest have come from lay

vocations—teaching, business and the law. One of the effects of the occupation was that many laymen were deprived of their posts or resigned them in protest. Many of these able men threw themselves into the work of the Church with the result that the new movement in the life of the Church has a strongly lay outlook.

The most important piece of work started at de Horst since it opened in November is the academy for the training of an entirely new type of church worker. I spent three days with the staff and first year of students at de Horst. Twenty-five men and twenty women have been chosen from two hundred potential students. Their ages vary from thirty-eight to twenty, and they come from all vocations and backgrounds. For two years they will receive a balanced and carefully planned training which includes a rigorous course of Bible study, sociology, social psychology, the origins of Christian culture in the west, Church history with a special emphasis on the relation of the Church and the world, modern social and political movements, especially communism. There is a fully-fledged tutorial system, and the teaching work is shared between the directors and visiting university teachers. On the academic side the training is on the level of the university. A full-time sports master gives physical training and instruction in such matters as camp management. After two years of training, students receive a diploma and go out to work for the Church. Some will become evangelists for specialized groups of the population, others will go into industry, others into State schools to give religious instruction (a new development in Holland), others will become youth leaders and members of staff of the new Peoples' Colleges which are springing up in Holland on the Danish pattern. After a year, or possibly two years, of this work they will return to the mother house for a further year, where in the light of their experience they will finish their training and get a chance to answer some of the practical questions raised by actual experience of their work. The atmosphere of the place is one of hard work, simple worship and Christian fellowship. The whole thing breathes *quality* at every level. There are no amenities and plenty of high spirits. There is no escape from the rigors of community life, and a large share of the work in garden and house is done by the students.

Both within and without the Church this new movement of life is threatened and challenged. Those who direct it in all its many aspects are keenly aware that there is no inevitability about spiritual growth. The price of maintaining growth is ceaseless labour, boundless trust in God and continual sacrifice. In these the Dutch Church is richly blessed.

Yours sincerely, Kathleen Bliss

THE ISSUE IN PALESTINE

By JAMES PARKES

The basic difficulty of the Palestine situation is that it is unique. All arguments by analogy miss the point entirely, just because as parallels they are unfair and untrue at vital points.

This uniqueness arises from the relationship of the Jewish people to the country. There is no parallel either to the history of the Jews or to the retention of a religious, physical and national association between a people and a land which the bulk of them left nearly two thousand years ago. That is the *uniqueness* of Palestine. It is a *problem* because the land did not stand wholly empty in the intervening period ; nor was it ever so wholly populated that their return should become physically impossible.

In the period 1917 (Balfour Declaration) to 1922 (issue of the Mandate by the Council of the League of Nations) the world gave official recognition to this relationship in giving valid international sanction to the recreation by the Jewish people of a National Home (also a unique form of institution) in Palestine. By this formula it tried to safeguard the position of the existing non-Jewish population, while leaving a necessary vagueness as to the form which Jewish developments might take. Only if we entirely reject the validity of this peculiar association of the Jews with Palestine are we entitled to dismiss all propositions to allow more Jewish immigration or further development as " forcing alien peoples on an Arab country." If we recognize it, then we are recognizing also that the immigrants are not " alien " and the country is not exclusively " Arab." This recognition the British Government has never been prepared to abandon, even in what the Zionists considered the " sell-out to Arab appeasement " of the Macdonald White Paper of 1939.

But we are still left with practical problems of very great difficulty, which cannot be solved by appeals to legalistic interpretations, or our promises to either side. For our promises were necessarily imprecise, since they were not promises to accept existing facts but promises to assist future situations to emerge. And that gives the interpretations which the recipients put on them an exceptional political importance. For they are difficult to reply to effectively, and the British Government has only (since the original definition of 1922 known as the Churchill White Paper) been able to define its intentions as " the fulfilment of the Mandate."

It is important to recognize, especially to-day when the Administration in Jerusalem is a police government, more isolated and more unpopular with both sides of its subjects than any British Administration ought to be, that the extent to which the promises

to both sides have been fulfilled in the twenty-five years of British Administration is remarkable. The Jewish National Home has grown to a vigorous community of about 600,000, with its own administration and executives ; and the Arabs, so far from diminishing, have nearly doubled their numbers and increased their standard of living.

Its achievement is all the more remarkable, and its blunders more explicable, when we consider the machinery of administration. Rarely has a more complicated machine been established, and only the British capacity for improvisation and " muddling through " has ever made it function. It is a maxim of political philosophy that an *imperium in imperio* should be avoided. There are at least four *imperia* in Palestine, two of which lie outside the control of the Administration—the World Zionist Organization and the Arab League—and two within its frontiers, but only partially within its control, the Jewish Agency and the Supreme Moslem Council ; and *all* have a claim to the loyalty of different sections of the population prior to that of the British High Commissioner and his administration. And with all these *imperia* the latter are themselves not an *imperium*, but only an administration to which instructions are given and lines of policy indicated by a distant Parliament and Colonial Office. To-day we have to add a further master in the Foreign Office. But there is another difficulty which is no less real for being more intangible. The Palestine Administration is a Middle Eastern Administration surrounded by Middle Eastern problems, and the influences of other British offices, consular or diplomatic, interested only in the Arabs. But the Jewish section of the population is not moved by the rhythm of the Middle East at all ; but by events in Europe or America, with which the Administrators have no contact, and of which most of them have little experience.

THE JEWISH BACKGROUND OF RECENT EVENTS

Palestine has been governed since 1939 on the basis of the Macdonald White Paper which fixed a final limit to Jewish immigration apart from Arab consent, and of the Land Regulations which so limited Jewish access to new land that its price often became prohibitive, even where it was legally permitted. This policy was the product of estimates exclusively of the Middle Eastern situation. But in Europe the Jewish situation had become desperate, even before the war placed them wholly in the hands of Hitler. That Jewish fears and anger were not artificially promoted, or based on hysteria or exaggeration, is proved by the fact that of the 9,000,000 Jews then living there are about a million survivors who escaped to the Soviet Union, and a million and a half live like ghosts amidst the wreckage of their former communities or in camps for displaced persons.

We must keep this picture in mind in examining the breach between the Jewish community in Palestine and the Administration. From 1939 the Jewish Agency, wholly supported by the Jewish community, refused to recognize the legality of the policy embodied in the White Paper. In this estimate of it, they may indeed have been wrong ; but there is no means of knowing ; for it could only have received final sanction from the Council of the League, which never met owing to the outbreak of the war. But this can be said, that there was *sufficient* grounds in the condemnation of the White Paper by the Mandates Commission for the action of the Agency to be worthy of respect. That action, however, inevitably led to serious consequences. For it could not be expected to stop at negative condemnation. The Agency was not concerned with theory or with the necessity of " appeasing " Arab feelings, but with rescuing such victims of Hitler as could escape to Palestine. They said quite openly that they would not co-operate with the government in preventing " illegal " immigration.

At first the Government to some extent turned a blind eye to the Agency's activity. Then it set itself, by increased patrols and coastguard activities, to counter it ; and those immigrants who were caught it threatened to (and in some cases did) deport with a statement that there would be no readmission for them after the war. Such a situation inevitably deteriorated, since the Administration's eyes were fixed on Arab reactions to the rhythm of the war in the Middle East, and the Agency's on Europe whence was coming the first terrible news of the wholesale murder in the Death Camps. Terrorism, of which there had been one or two sporadic explosions during the latter part of the Arab rebellion, reappeared. The Stern gang came into prominence, and later the Irgun Zvai Leumi.

But side by side with their foolish and tragic crimes, there was a change in the activity of the Haganah which was more serious. This force, at bottom, corresponds to the territorials in England, not to the private armies of Hitler and Mosley. It dates originally from before the British Mandate, as a defence force of the agricultural settlements against raids from Bedawin or neighbouring Arab villages. After the troubles of 1921 and 1929, it was recognized by the Administration as necessary on the practical grounds that it was impossible for either police or military to guarantee the simultaneous security of all the settlements, so that it was essential that the settlers should be properly trained and armed to defend themselves. The Arab rebellion led to an increase of their numbers, their training and their armaments. In fact a mobile force of the Haganah was first inaugurated not by the Agency but by Orde Wingate, as an essential part of defeating the Arab guerillas in the hills ; and these men later carried out, at considerable loss of life, important missions in Syria and Iraq, and were dropped by parachute to do

vital work in Europe. Another step was taken when the Germans were at Alamein. They were trained in sabotage work, in case the British had to evacuate Egypt and the whole Mediterranean littoral.

During the war many thousands of the Haganah volunteered for service in the British Army, Navy and Air Force. Altogether, 27,000 served. This, however, was only one side of its activity, only one side of the concerns of the Jewish community. There were two other aspects, both likely to bring conflict with the authorities. In the first place it was active in aiding the entry of immigrants, and this at times involved the commission of acts of violence, though very rarely the loss of life. Beaches where a ship might be expected to arrive were cordoned off by mined roads, or sabotage on the railway. Wireless and telephone communications were broken, and coastguard stations blown up.

It is easy for us to condemn such actions without qualification. But we must remember the circumstances. In 1940 and 1941 it was not impossible to escape from Europe by way of Turkey, provided it was possible to leave Turkey at its south-eastern corner. For Turkey was a poor country, with no extra food for refugees. We (and up to 1941 France) controlled that exit, and we kept it blocked. Not only would we not allow Jews to escape by it into Palestine ; we would not allow them to cross the frontier at all, even for internment elsewhere. We only modified our position when it was too late, in the winter of 1942. But over 6,000 crossed the frontier between then and the end of the war, which gives some indication of the lives which could have been saved had we opened the frontier earlier—and the Jews were perfectly well aware that this was so, and that it was *their* families, and *their* relatives who died with every horror and indignity in Hitler's camps because of our action.

But that was not all. No responsible Jewish leader, considering not only the background of the White Paper, and the activities of the various British missions in the Middle East, including the Palestine Administration, but also the likely developments of British policy, could avoid taking into account the practical possibility that, at the end of the war, the National Home might find itself dependent on its own strength and its own resources for its physical security. It was not merely that Arabs made no secret of their intentions, should Hitler win, but that the British seemed to consider the conciliation of Arab opinion the overriding principle of all Middle Eastern policy. No Jew could help reflecting on the care with which all mention of " Jewish " services was avoided in British despatches ; and it was not till towards the end of the war that they were given a Jewish Brigade Group. And it was no secret that the Arabs were collecting all the arms they could, that Arabs often joined the forces simply to acquire a rifle, with which they

then deserted. The Haganah began seriously to build up an arsenal against possible events in the future.

THE ARAB BACKGROUND

The attitude which the Zionists have taken towards the White Paper of 1939, the Arabs of Palestine have taken towards the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. They have never accepted it, and refused to co-operate in its fulfilment. Legally they could not make out such a good case, for the Mandate is undoubtedly a document with the legal backing of the official international organization of the time, the League of Nations. Neither can they claim that the fulfilment of the policy of the Mandate has caused a single Arab death, suicide or emigration anywhere. But here we are at once up against issues which arise out of the uniqueness of the Palestine situation. On the mere basis of its being "legal" the policy of the Mandate could not possibly be justified; and the *legitimate* reactions of the Arab population were concerned with what might happen in the future, not with what had happened in the past or was happening in the present. But what might happen in the future would be the consequence of a decision on which they were not consulted, which distinguished their situation as the majority of the indigenous population from that of the indigenous population in every other country. The framers of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate had ignored the fact that their adoption of a unique policy to meet the unique situation of the Jews affected the normal rights of the Arabs. Arab intransigence and rebellion were the result.

This is the weakness of the otherwise admirable Churchill White Paper of 1922, with its clear statement of British policy to Jew and Arab; it rested simply on the legality of the League's decision; but legality, like patriotism, is not always enough. At the same time civil servants, administrators and cabinets alike might well boggle at the task of making an official declaration, implying a final verdict, on a combination of religious, historical and social rights, on whose interpretation scholars might always be disposed to disagree.

But the Arab fears were related also to estimates of the present, backed by incautious or extremist Jewish statements. They saw the wealth and the skill of the Zionists; they saw the gradual extension of their holdings, and the rapid expansion of their population; and they felt that to maintain their position against such competitors was impossible. Having come to the conclusion that the Jews had become too strong for them to attack by themselves, they turned to the Arab League for support; and the Arab League has taken up their case with the greater enthusiasm for its being almost the only issue on which they could be united.

Such is the situation in which the British Administration has come to rely more and more on its police and on military power and less and less on the sincere co-operation of either section of its subjects. Indeed it possesses no constitutional machinery by which its subjects can democratically influence it. In such circumstances the excuse that "law and order" must be restored is unhappily without positive value; and the fact that the searches and arrests were carried out without a single casualty inflicted by the Jews in itself weakens the Government's claim that such violent action was necessary. The appalling crime which has happened since the Agency leaders were removed likewise throws doubts on its wisdom. But *some* action certainly was necessary in a general situation which was steadily drifting from bad to worse, and some action was necessary against terrorism. But the first could only be secured by a more fundamental examination of the whole case than the Anglo-American Committee had the time or knowledge to make, and the second could only be secured by winning the co-operation of the general Jewish population which the Government's action has instead antagonized.

What we have to face now is not whether we can concede sufficient to either Jew or Arab to secure an uneasy return to the previous superficial quiet which represents "law and order" in a police state, but whether in any imaginable development the British position can be restored to secure creative co-operation with both sides of the population; and it is their conviction (shared by the present writer) that all the schemes put forward to this end are Utopian which is turning more and more serious students to the solution of partition. There is a chance that Jews and Arabs may learn to co-operate with each other, once there is no third party involved; for they are extremely dependent on each other, and local relations are often good. Partition gives each a chance to determine its own destiny, without fear of the other, provided there is a British or international guarantee of the frontiers determined, and an adequate guarantee might even prevent bloodshed during the first difficult period; and partition would bring to an end a British Administration which has in fact failed, even though history may subsequently accept the excuse that its failure was inevitable.

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